

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Asheboro Hosiery Mills and Cranford Furniture Company Complex

Asheboro, Randolph County, RD0849, Listed 12/7/2011

Nomination by Heather Fearnbach

Photographs by Heather Fearnbach, December 2010



Asheboro Hosiery Mill No. 1, South Church Street, 1917 mill and 1924 addition



Cranford Furniture Company, 230 West Academy Street, 1925 factory

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Asheboro Hosiery Mills and Cranford Furniture Company Complex

other names/site number Cranford Industries, National Chair Company

2. Location

street & number 133 and 139 South Church Street, 230 West Academy Street

N/A not for publication

city or town Asheboro

N/A vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Randolph code 151 zip code 27204

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination
☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of
Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property
☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally
☐ statewide ☒ locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See Continuation sheet
for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

☐ entered in the National Register.

☐ See continuation sheet

☐ determined eligible for the
National Register.

☐ See continuation sheet

☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register.

☐ removed from the National
Register.

☐ other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Asheboro Hosiery Mills and Cranford Furniture Company Complex
Name of Property

Randolph County, NC
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
4	0	buildings
0	0	sites
2	0	structures
0	0	objects
6	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY: Manufacturing Facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY: Manufacturing Facility

VACANT: Not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Heavy Timber Mill Construction

Other: Steel-framed, load-bearing brick wall mill
construction

Classical Revival

Art Moderne

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK

walls BRICK
CONCRETE

METAL

roof ASPHALT

METAL

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Industry

Period of Significance

1917-1961

Significant Dates

1917

1924-1925

Late 1930s

1945

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State Agency
- ☐ Federal Agency
- ☐ Local Government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other

Name of repository: Randolph County Library, Asheboro

Asheboro Hosiery Mills and Cranford Furniture Company Complex
Name of Property

Randolph County, NC
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approximately 3 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 17 607020 3951560
Zone Easting Northing
2 _____

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing
4 _____
See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Heather Fearnbach
organization Fearnbach History Services, Inc. date 3/4/2011
street & number 3334 Nottingham Road telephone 336-765-2661
city or town Winston-Salem state NC zip code 27104

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Breck J. Richardson (owner of former Cranford Furniture Company building) *see continuation sheet
street & number P. O. Box 3155 telephone 336-302-9770
city or town Asheboro state NC zip code 27204

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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National Park Service**

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Section 7. Narrative Description

Setting

Located adjacent to Asheboro's downtown business district, the Asheboro Hosiery Mills and Cranford Furniture Company complex occupies the south three-quarters of the block bounded by Sunset Avenue on the north, South Church Street on the west, West Academy Street on the south, and the railroad tracks on the east. Two-story brick commercial buildings face Sunset Avenue at the block's north end. The former Asheboro Hosiery Mills plant is located in the block's central section, while the factory erected by Cranford Furniture Company stands at the property's south end. The complex is situated on six tax parcels encompassing approximately three acres.

The surrounding area is primarily commercial and industrial, with some residential development to the west and south. Sunset Avenue, which runs east-west through Asheboro's business center north of the Cranford Industries office and knitting mills, is lined with commercial buildings. Historic images illustrate that a few early-twentieth-century dwellings stood on the west side of South Church Street facing the plant and that a large lot to their north, just past Hill Street, was utilized for agricultural purposes. The houses are no longer standing and the City of Asheboro has constructed a gabled steel pavilion surrounded by a paved parking area to shelter the Downtown Farmers' Market at the cultivated lot's location.

Asheboro Hosiery Mills

The former Asheboro Hosiery Mills plant encompasses industrial buildings erected from 1917 through the 1940s and the Cranford Industries Office, constructed in 1925. For the ease of description and in keeping with the 1929 site plan, the industrial building that is closest to South Church Street will be referred to as Mill No. 1, while the building adjacent to the railroad will be called Mill No. 2.

Mill No. 1

South Church Street, 1917, 1924, late 1930s, 1940s, 2000

This mill's original section, constructed in 1917, stands parallel to South Church Street at the building's northwestern end. The two-story brick edifice is executed in five-to-one common bond with segmental-arched window and door openings and a very low-pitched gable roof. Projecting rafter ends buttress the deep eaves and a long, rectangular, monitor-roofed frame skylight, now enclosed, pierces the roof. Sign bands painted with "B & H Panel Co.," the name of the company that currently owns and operates the complex, extend across the north and west elevation's central bays between the first

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and second-story windows. The original sign bands at the same locations read “Asheboro Hosiery Mills, Inc.”

The company erected the two-story addition on the 1917 building’s south end as part of their 1924 plant expansion and enlarged the mill again in the late 1930s with the construction of a perpendicular two-story wing near the main mill’s southeast corner, doubling the building’s size.¹ The 1924 and 1930s additions are executed in five-to-one common bond with very low-pitched gable roofs with projecting rafter ends and stepped parapets at the south and east ends. Both sections have large rectangular window openings and metal casement windows with eight-pane central sections that tilt open.

Documentary photos illustrate the 1917 building’s original double-hung, twelve-over-twelve, wood-sash windows. All of the exterior windows were replaced with metal casements by the 1940s, but the original wood sashes on the south elevation’s second story that were encapsulated by the 1924 addition are still intact and operable. The windows feature a mechanism that allowed the upper sash to tilt open, facilitating ventilation. An original, tall, raised-paneled door remains on the same wall as the windows.

The lot’s grade slopes slightly to the south and east, allowing for a partial basement at the 1930s addition’s east end. Concrete steps lead down to the basement entrance on the north elevation, which, like the wing’s other doorways, is surmounted by a three-course, segmental-arched, all-header lintel. The basement entrance is one bay west of stacked sliding doors on the second and third floors. The addition’s only other exterior entrance is a double-leaf door at the center of the east end’s second story.

The interior retains wood floors and exposed brick walls. Chamfered square wood posts and substantial wood beams support the floor and roof systems in the 1917 and 1924 sections, while steel posts and beams were used to construct the late 1930s addition. Steel braces and girders reinforce some areas, most likely to compensate for the weight and vibration of heavy equipment. Fluorescent lights, sprinkler system pipes, and HVAC ductwork have been dropped from the ceilings throughout the building.

The mill’s open plan is substantially intact. Beadboard covers the walls of the enclosed wood stairs that lead to the second floor from the northeast corners of both the 1917 building and the 1930s addition. A folding board-and-batten door with diagonal cross-braces hangs at the base of the 1917 stair next to a double-leaf wood door on the north elevation that has two large square panels in each side. A frame partition wall creates an entrance vestibule at the 1924 addition’s northwest corner, and

¹ The two-story wing does not appear on the 1931 Sanborn map but is illustrated in a line drawing and photographs that appear in Asheboro Chamber of Commerce brochures from the late 1930s and early 1940s.

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a straight run of stairs partially enclosed with vertical boards rises on the north wall to the second floor. The double-leaf horizontal-raised-panel exterior door at the 1924 addition's west entrance appears to be original, but the transom that surmounted the door has been removed and the opening enclosed with plywood. Doors with horizontal raised panels provide access to the restrooms at the 1924 addition's southeast corner, which have frame vertical-board-sheathed walls. The majority of the interior doorways between the building's sections are open, while metal fire doors slide on metal tracks and are held open by weighted pulleys at most exterior doorways.

Recent modifications to the 1917 building include the installation of frame partition walls to create a break room at the first floor's southwest corner and an office at the northwest corner. A modern conveyor belt runs between the first and second floors at the 1924 addition's southeast end just north of the corner restrooms. Updates in the late 1930s addition consist of restrooms at the northwest corner, a freight elevator near the center of the south elevation, and frame particle-board-sheathed partition walls that create an electrical maintenance shop at the southeast corner.

The one-story brick shipping and receiving room that projects from the mill's south elevation was built in the 1940s, as it does not appear on a circa 1940 aerial but is illustrated on the 1950 updates to the 1931 Sanborn map. The one-story addition differs from the late 1930s two-story wing, however, as it was executed in six-to-one common bond with wood ceiling joists and a concrete floor. The concrete loading dock that extends toward South Church Street from the west elevation and the metal canopy that shelters it were added at a later date.

A 1929 site plan depicts the 1927 dye house, 1917 storage building, and 1920 boiler house that stood east of the 1917/1924 building. Hyphens connected the dye house and storage building to the mill by 1931. All three buildings are illustrated on the 1950 Sanborn map, but were demolished by the time a one-story, steel-framed, shed-roofed, four-bay warehouse was erected at that location in 2000.²

The warehouse extends from the 1924 addition's east elevation, rests on a concrete foundation, is sheathed with metal siding, and is protected by corrugated metal roof. A window opening near the late 1930s wing's northwest corner was enlarged to serve as the interior door into the warehouse and most of the remaining window openings of the 1924 and 1930s buildings that were encapsulated by the warehouse have been bricked-up. Four loading bays with roll-up metal doors and a single-leaf entrance pierce the warehouse's east elevation.

² Building dates from the 1929 Asheboro Hosiery Mills site plan that appears in Lowell McKay Whatley Jr.'s *Architectural History of Randolph County, North Carolina* (Asheboro: City of Asheboro, et. al., 1985), 194; Sanborn Map Company, Asheboro, North Carolina, May 1910, April 1922, April 1931, and April 1950; and Randolph County property tax cards.

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Mill No. 2

133 South Church Street, 1924, 1945, 1970s

Cranford Industries operated Randolph Chair Company, which occupied the site's northeast corner, through the early 1920s, but in 1924 Asheboro Hosiery Mills constructed a large two-story, flat-roofed, brick knitting mill on the former Randolph Chair Company factory site. The building consisted of a rectangular main block, a two-story storage wing on the west elevation, and one-story staging rooms, a boiler room, and a machine shop on the south elevation. By 1931, two enclosed walkways spanned the area between Mill No. 1's 1917 and 1930s sections and Mill No. 2's southwest corner. The company also erected a three-story brick building that abutted the 1924 mill's north elevation at the same time and leased it to Old Dominion Box Company, who operated a factory at the site for about twenty years.³

Both buildings were extensively renovated as part of Asheboro Hosiery Mills' 1945 update. The floor systems in the three-story, flat-roofed factory were removed and the interior was completely reconfigured, creating a two-story building with structural steel framing, high ceilings, and improved lighting. A narrow, two-story, brick, Art Moderne-style addition on the west elevation created a new entrance, stair hall, and elevator tower.⁴

The 1945 addition is executed in five-to-one common bond and features a central bay framed by a two-story, stepped, soldier-course band surrounding a double-leaf wood door on the first floor and a large rectangular window in the second story. Translucent glass blocks originally filled the window opening, but most have been removed. Each door leaf contains four glazed panes above three horizontal raised panels. It appears that a canopy may have originally sheltered the entrance.

Two square brick panels with soldier course borders surmounted by translucent-glass-block, second-floor windows bounded by soldier-course bands flank the central entrance bay. A small, rectangular, eight-pane, metal sash window pierces the top of the tall elevator tower, which rises above the roof parapet at the addition's southwest corner.

The contiguous two-story building also received a long, two-story, brick, four-bay-deep addition on its west elevation in 1945, almost doubling its square footage. Large metal casement windows with eight-pane central sections that tilt open illuminate the interior. Aerial photographs indicate that the

³ Ibid.; *News and Observer*, *The North Carolina Yearbook* (Raleigh: *News and Observer*, 1931), 78.

⁴ "Asheboro Hosiery Mill Expansion Under Way Provide Plenty of Jobs," *Asheboro Courier-Tribune*, September 9, 1945, page 1; Chip Womick, "A dream that just ran out of steam," *The Courier-Tribune*, Asheboro, October 29, 1999, page A10; Sanborn Map Company, Asheboro, North Carolina, April 1931 with April 1950 updates, Sheet 3, accessed via NCLive.

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building's roof was originally flat. The renovation encompassed the construction of a very low-pitched gable roof with projecting rafter ends.

The two-story storage wing that projected from the 1924 knitting mill's southwest corner has been demolished, but the building is otherwise substantially intact. The one-story boiler rooms, staging room, and a machine shop on the south elevation are extant. A round metal smokestack extends through the south boiler room's roof. A new windowless façade was erected on the east elevation at a later date; perhaps, based on its appearance, in the 1970s. The façade, constructed to create a uniform appearance given the building's visibility from Asheboro's downtown commercial district, extends the full length of the 1924 buildings. A tall brick 1950s smokestack emblazoned with "Cranford Industries" in white letters rises at the buildings' south end.

The mill's open interior features wood and concrete floors and exposed brick walls. Chamfered square wood posts and substantial wood beams support the floor and roof systems in the south building, while steel posts and beams were used to create the north building's new interior structural system in 1945.

The staircase in the 1945 entrance rises to a landing at the addition's north end and turns to the south. A vertical-board-sheathed wall topped with a flat-board handrail encloses the lower run of stairs and serves as the upper run's balustrade. A square newel post with a square cap anchors the wall's north end at the intermediate landing, while a vertical-board-balustrade secures the second-floor landing.

Frame partition walls sheathed with vertical boards create an office and restrooms at the northeast corner of the south building's second floor. Plywood panels cover the walls of the office at the southeast corner of the north building's second floor. Fluorescent lights and sprinkler system pipes have been dropped from the ceilings throughout the mill. Metal fire doors slide on metal tracks and are held open by weighted pulleys at most doorways.

Cranford Industries Smokestack, 1950s, contributing structure

A tall brick smokestack executed in all-header bond and emblazoned with "Cranford Industries" in white letters rises south of the boiler room at Mill No. 2's south end. Sanborn maps indicate that coal fueled the complex's steam heating system. The brick smokestack's exact construction date is unknown. It does not appear in early documentary photos or on Sanborn maps through 1950, making it likely that it was erected as part of the 1950s site improvements.

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**Cranford Industries Office
139 South Church Street, 1925, contributing building**

The one-story, brick, flat-roofed office faces South Church Street at the complex's northwest corner. A stepped parapet topped with granite surmounts the rubbed brick, running-bond façade. The façade's Classical Revival-style features include a round-arched doorway with granite keystones above a fanlight and the granite sill, lintel, and keystones that embellish the group of four metal casement windows.

The stepped side and rear elevations were laid in five-to-one common bond, capped with terra cotta coping, and contain single and paired metal casement windows. Single-leaf entrances provide access from the south and east elevations. A short square brick smokestack extends above the roof at near the office's southeast corner. A narrow, shorter, one-story restroom wing projects from the building's northeast corner.

The interior encompasses a foyer and reception area at the west end, offices and a conference room on the central hall's north side, storage and utility rooms on the south side, and restrooms at the east end. Most walls are sheathed with solid wood panels bounded by thin narrow wood battens that cover the joints and create three sections: a window-sill-level wainscoting, a tall central field, and a short top border. Simple baseboards, chair rails, and crown molding complete the wall finish. The solid wood doors match the paneled walls and retain original hardware. The restrooms and water fountain room retain mid-twentieth-century tile floors and wainscoting (grey and pale green in the men's room, black and white in the fountain room, and peach and burgundy in the women's room). Later modifications to the office include commercial carpeting, acoustical tile ceilings, and dropped fluorescent lighting.

Randolph County property tax cards indicate that this building was constructed in 1925. It does not appear on the 1922 Sanborn map but is included on the 1929 site plan and the 1931 Sanborn map.

**Lumber Shed
Located between Asheboro Hosiery Mill No. 1 and the Cranford Furniture Company Factory,
late 1950s, contributing structure**

This one-story, shed-roofed structure has a four-bay west section with concrete-block west and north walls and a three-bay frame east section that is situated slightly farther north, creating a stepped effect that corresponds with the property line's configuration. Wood posts support the frame roof system and the metal roof, and metal siding covers each section's east elevation and the upper portions of the open south elevations.

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The structure does not appear on the 1950 Sanborn map. It was likely constructed to replace the frame lumber shed that extended from the north elevation of Cranford Lumber Company's 1941 wing when the two-story concrete-block warehouse was erected at that location in the late 1950s. The shed is situated on the north edge of the tax parcel that includes the former Cranford Furniture Company factory. A one-story, frame, front-gable-roofed, prefabricated shed sheathed with deteriorated plywood siding stands north of the lumber shed.

Cranford Furniture Company 230 West Academy Street, 1925, late 1930s, late 1950s, 1998

The former Cranford Furniture Company plant occupies the block's south end. The building's earliest section, constructed around 1925, stands at the northwest corner of South Church and West Academy streets. The two-story brick edifice is executed in five-to-one common bond with stepped-parapet north and south elevations capped with cast-stone coping and a very low-pitched gable roof. A metal-sheathed frame exterior staircase rises on the north elevation to the second floor.

A sign band painted with "B & H Panel Co.," the name of the company currently utilizing the complex, extends across the west elevation's five central bays between the first and second-story windows. Most of the original windows were replaced with metal casements by the 1940s, but some double-hung, six-over-six, wood-sash, second-story windows remain at the north end of the building's west elevation. Wide, double-hung, three-over-three, wood-sash windows were recently installed in the second-story window openings at the south end of the building's west elevation and on the second floor of the building's south elevation above the bricked-up first-story windows.

Cranford Furniture Company erected a two-story addition at the 1925 factory's southeast corner in the late 1930s.⁵ The addition, which doubled the building's size, was executed in five-to-one common bond with a very low-pitched gable roof with exposed rafter ends. Terra cotta coping caps the stepped parapets on the addition's east and west elevations. The building features large rectangular window openings and original metal casement windows with six-pane central sections that tilt open. A recessed door at the southwest corner serves as the primary entrance and is sheltered by a flat-roofed metal canopy supported by a slender metal pole. The National Chair Company began operating the factory in 1941 and updated the plant's equipment soon thereafter.

The building is still a functioning furniture factory—B & H Panel Company—with an open plan and exposed brick walls. Chamfered square wood posts and substantial wood beams support the 1925 section's floor and roof systems, while steel posts and beams were used to construct the 1941 addition.

⁵ The two-story wing does not appear on the 1931 Sanborn map but is illustrated in a line drawing and photographs that appear in Asheboro Chamber of Commerce brochures from the late 1930s and early 1940s.

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The 1925 building's first story has a replacement concrete floor, but the second story and the late 1930s addition retain wood floors. Fluorescent lights, sprinkler system pipes, and HVAC ductwork have been dropped from the ceilings throughout the mill. Some interior doors have been removed, but original and modern metal fire doors slide on metal tracks and are held open by weighted pulleys at many doorways.

Plywood-sheathed frame partition walls create an office and a break room at the south end of the 1925 building's first floor, which contains furniture fabrication equipment. The office suite at the west end of the late 1930s addition's first floor has a dropped acoustical tile ceiling and faux-wood paneled walls. Painting and drying equipment occupies the remainder of the late 1930s building's first floor. Particle board sheathes the upper run of the wood stairs that lead to the second floor from the late 1930s addition's northeast corner. B & H Panel Company currently utilizes the second floors of the 1925 and late 1930s buildings as storage areas.

B & H Panel Company erected the one-story, shed-roofed, concrete-block warehouse that projects from the late 1930s addition's east elevation after purchasing the property in 1987. Three loading bays with roll-up metal doors and a single-leaf entrance pierce the warehouse's north elevation, while one roll-up metal door and a single-leaf entrance provide access to the building from the east elevation.

Two two-story concrete-block warehouse additions extend from the late 1930s wing's north elevation. The flat-roofed central warehouse does not appear on the 1950 Sanborn map, but was likely constructed in the late 1950s based on the type of steel trusses used to support the roof. Randolph County property tax cards indicate that the north warehouse, which has a structural steel frame, was erected in 1998. Both warehouses have poured concrete floors.

Large openings in the 1925 building's east elevation allow interior access from that space to both warehouses. A ramp with metal railings facilitates the movement of materials and product on the 1950s warehouse's ground floor. That warehouse connects to the 1930s addition and the 1998 warehouse through first- and second-story doors in those buildings' north and south elevations. Two exterior doors—one sliding and one double-leaf—pierce the 1950s warehouse's east elevation.

Roll-up metal doors provide exterior access to the 1998 warehouse from the north and east elevations. A metal-sheathed frame exterior staircase rises on the east elevation to the second floor. A small, gable-roofed, metal-sided, elevated addition projects from the west end of the warehouse's north elevation. A prefabricated metal carport stands on a large poured concrete pad near the north elevation's south end.

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Integrity Statement

The Asheboro Hosiery Mills and Cranford Furniture Company complex encompasses three of Asheboro's earliest and most intact early-twentieth-century industrial buildings. The 1917 Asheboro Hosiery Mill No. 1, which appears to be the city's second-oldest extant hosiery mill; the 1924 Asheboro Hosiery Mill No. 2; and the 1925 Cranford Furniture Company factory have experienced remarkably little alteration over decades of continuous use.

Asheboro Hosiery Mill No. 1's original twelve-over-twelve wood-sash windows that remain on the second floor's south elevation and the monitor-roofed frame skylight that also illuminated that space are particularly significant survivals. Cranford Industries' concern with presenting an up-to-date image is manifested in Asheboro Hosiery Mill No. 2's streamlined Art Moderne-style façade, erected in 1945. The 1970s brick veneer cladding on that building's east elevation resulted in a clean, uniform appearance, which was important given its proximity to Asheboro's central business district and does not detract from the complex's overall integrity.

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Section 8. Statement of Significance

The Asheboro Hosiery Mills and Cranford Furniture Company complex meets National Register of Historic Places Criterion A for industry and Criterion C for architecture. C. C. Cranford's investment in the site began in 1908, when he purchased property on Church Street adjacent to Asheboro's central commercial district that contained the Randolph Chair Company as well as vacant buildings that once functioned as the Asheboro Furniture Company. In 1917, he constructed a two-story brick building to house Asheboro Hosiery Mills, which grew from a plant with approximately thirty employees operating thirty seamless hosiery machines to become one of Randolph County's largest industrial concerns, employing six hundred workers who used one thousand circular knitting machines to manufacture sixty thousand pairs of hose daily in 1937. Around 1918, he erected the first new building in the Cranford Furniture Company complex. By 1938, his businesses, collectively known as Cranford Industries, encompassed Asheboro Hosiery Mills, Cranford Furniture Company, National Chair Company, Piedmont Chair Company, Standard Tytape Company, and the Asheboro Hardwood Company and provided jobs for fifteen hundred Randolph County residents. The company expanded the Asheboro Hosiery Mills complex and the Cranford Furniture Company factory significantly in the late 1930s and 1940s as demand resulted in increased production. By the late 1950s, however, both industries waned given changing technology and consumer taste.

The period of significance begins in 1917, with the construction of the first Asheboro Hosiery Mills building, and continues to 1961, encompassing the most productive years of the knitting mill and the contiguous furniture factory operated by Cranford Industries. Although Asheboro Hosiery Mills remained in business until 1998, the industrial use of the complex after 1961 is not of exceptional significance.

The Asheboro Hosiery Mills and Cranford Furniture Company complex is also significant architecturally, as it reflects advances in industrial building design from the 1910s through the 1950s. The 1917 Asheboro Hosiery Mill No. 1's five-to-one common bond brick walls, heavy timber frame, low-pitched gable roof with a monitor-roofed skylight, segmental-arched window and door openings, and large double-hung, twelve-over-twelve, wood-sash windows are representative of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century fire-resistant industrial architecture. The 1917 building's 1924 addition, the 1924 Asheboro Hosiery Mill No. 2, and the 1925 Cranford Furniture Company factory manifest the ongoing use of heavy timber framing in conjunction with load-bearing brick exterior walls in industrial construction during this period. All three edifices are executed in five-to-one common bond with low-pitched gable roofs and stepped-parapet north and south elevations. The additions erected from the 1930s through the 1950s incorporate structural steel framing systems commonly used during the mid-twentieth century. The complex's earlier buildings are completely utilitarian, eschewing architectural trends, with the exception of the office, which features Classical Revival-style façade elements including

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a round-arched doorway with granite keystones above a fanlight and the granite sill, lintel, and keystones framing the large window opening. In 1945 the company embraced current design trends, erecting a streamlined Art Moderne-style façade with translucent glass block windows on Asheboro Hosiery Mill No. 2 and thus conveying a sense of modernity and industrial prosperity.

Historical Background

Chisholm Clark Cranford, known as “C. C.,” moved to Asheboro from his family’s farm in the New Hope community of southwestern Randolph County in 1895. The twenty-year-old entrepreneur began delivering flour and meal by wagon for the Asheboro Roller Mill at a salary of \$15 per month. He invested his savings in the company’s stock, which he then sold in order to establish Crown Milling Company. Cranford only owned the roller mill for a few years before selling it in 1913 as he continued to diversify his business interests.⁶

Following the lead of other piedmont industrialists, he invested in furniture factories and hosiery mills. North Carolina’s first hosiery manufacturing concerns included the Randleman Hosiery Mill in Randolph County, incorporated in 1893, and the Durham Hosiery Company and the Golden Belt Hosiery Company, also in Durham, both established in 1895. By 1914 the state’s seventy-four knitting plants employed approximately eight thousand workers who produced almost nine million dollars-worth of stockings. Most hosiery mills were located in central North Carolina cities with strong textile manufacturing traditions such as Burlington, High Point, Asheboro, Winston-Salem, and Hickory. Furniture factories—which often manufactured spindles, bobbins, and shuttles for textile mills in addition to inexpensive furnishings marketed to mill workers—abounded in the same municipalities, as well as in Thomasville, Lexington, Salisbury, and Statesville.⁷

⁶ Womick, “A dream that just ran out of steam,” pages A1 and A10; “Tar Heel of the Week: C. C. Cranford,” *Raleigh News and Observer*, January 29, 1950, reprinted in an unnamed Asheboro newspaper with the title “75th Birthday Today” on February 2, 1950, from the “Asheboro: Biography, Cranford” vertical file in the Randolph Room of the Asheboro Public Library. By 1922, Southern Crown Milling Company operated out of a two-story commercial building at the southwest corner of the intersection of Depot Street (now Sunset Avenue) and the railroad and a three-story flour, feed, and corn mill south of the commercial building. The Southern Crown Milling Company complex, owned by the W. F. Redding family from 1913 until 1958, stood just north of the Randolph Chair Company, Asheboro Hosiery Mills, and Cranford Chair Company. Sanborn Map Company, Asheboro, North Carolina, April 1922, Sheet 3; Randolph County Historical Society, *Randolph County, 1779-1979* (Winston-Salem: Hunter Publishing Company, 1980), 162.

⁷ Brent D. Glass, *The Textile Industry in North Carolina: A History* (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, 1992), 44; L. Barron Mills Jr. *Randolph County: A Brief History* (Raleigh: Office of Archives and History, 2008), 89; Jean Bradley Anderson, *Durham County: A History of Durham County, North Carolina* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 213.

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In 1908, C. C. Cranford purchased property on Church Street adjacent to Asheboro's central commercial district that contained the Randolph Chair Company as well as vacant buildings that once functioned as the Asheboro Furniture Company. The one-story Randolph Chair Company planing mill and factory, which encompassed a central manufacturing space, a stock room, a finishing and varnishing room, and a steam-powered drying kiln, stood in the property's northeast quadrant adjacent to the railroad. Factory employees assembled the chair frames and delivered them to the homes of workers throughout Randolph County, many of whom were women, who wove the chairs' double-caned seats. The company grew exponentially under Cranford's direction, becoming one of the county's most successful industrial enterprises.⁸

The Asheboro Furniture complex to the south included two furniture warehouses, a lumber storage building with two steam-powered drying kilns, a wood-working shop, a stock room, and a two-story packing and finishing building. By 1910, the company had ceased operating and the engine, boiler, and some of the machinery had been removed. Cranford acquired the business and resumed production under the name of Cranford Chair Company, manufacturing caned chairs.⁹

C. C. Cranford also invested in Acme Hosiery Mills, established by seventeen Asheboro businessmen in 1907, but soon sold his interest in that concern and opened a competing business, Asheboro Hosiery Mills. In 1917, he erected a two-story brick building to house his newest endeavor. The plant's approximately thirty employees operated thirty seamless hosiery machines, initially producing men's socks but later weaving women's stockings. The mill featured the latest technology, with steam engines powering electric generators and electric lights. A large monitor-roofed skylight illuminated the second floor, which contained the knitting equipment. The first floor served as a finishing area and the one-story hip-roofed building to the east functioned as a dye house.¹⁰ The site's proximity to the railroad, which serves as the property's east boundary, allowed for convenient receiving and shipping.

⁸ "75th Birthday Today," *Raleigh News and Observer* article reprinted in an unnamed newspaper on February 2, 1950, Sanborn Map Company, Asheboro, North Carolina, May 1910, Sheet 2. P. H. Morris, W. J. Scarborough, and J. D. Simpson established the Asheboro Furniture company, while G. G. Hendricks founded the Randolph Chair Company. In 1921, the Randolph Chair Company owned capital worth \$80,000 and employed 40 workers who produced \$100,000-worth of merchandise. Mrs. W. C. Hammer and Miss Massa E. Lambert, "History of Asheboro (to 1938)," *Asheboro Courier-Tribune*, 1938, reprinted by the Randolph County Historical Society, 1968, 5; Fred Burgess, *Randolph County, Economic and Social* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, Department of Rural Social Economics, May 1924), 41; Whatley, *Architectural History of Randolph County*, North Carolina, 195.

⁹ Sanborn Map Company, Asheboro, North Carolina, May 1910, Sheet 2; Whatley, *Architectural History of Randolph County*, 223.

¹⁰ Womick, "A dream that just ran out of steam," A10; Sanborn Map Company, Asheboro, North Carolina, April 1922, Sheet 3.

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Asheboro Hosiery Mills was the largest of the four Randolph County knitting mills operating in 1921 in terms of capital. The company, valued at \$125,000, employed one hundred workers who produced \$250,000-worth of hosiery that year, averaging twelve thousand pairs of stockings per day. By that time, department stores including S. S. Kresge, F. W. Woolworth, Levi Strauss, and Sears, Roebuck, and Company purchased the company's socks and stockings. The F. W. Woolworth Company's 1921 order—\$55,263-worth of merchandise for nine stores throughout the United States—was particularly sizable.¹¹ Contracts such as these allowed Asheboro Hosiery Mills to expand through the 1920s and survive through the Great Depression.

The company enlarged their plant significantly during this period, erecting several new buildings and a two-story addition on the 1917 building's south end in 1924. Knitting and looping operations remained on the original building's second floor, while the shipping department utilized the first floor. The south addition's first floor became the finishing department and the second floor housed additional knitting machines. A new one-story, gable-roofed dye house with stepped parapet end walls and a one-story, flat-parapet-roofed storage building stood east of the 1917 building by 1929. A two story addition was erected in the space between the storage room and the 1917 building around 1930 to serve as a stockroom.¹²

Cranford Industries operated Randolph Chair Company through the early 1920s, but in 1924 Asheboro Hosiery Mills constructed a large two-story building on the former Randolph Chair Company factory site, more than doubling the knitting mill's square footage. The new building contained knitting equipment on the second floor, bringing Asheboro Hosiery's total number of knitting machines to 524. The first floor housed boarding machines, where socks were placed on flat metal foot-shaped forms and pressed between two heated surfaces before being paired and packaged. The two-story wing on the west elevation served as storage. One-story staging rooms, a boiler room, and a machine shop extended from the south elevation. Enclosed walkways spanned the distance between the two buildings.¹³

The company also erected a three-story building that abutted the new two-story knitting mill's north elevation in 1924 and leased it to Old Dominion Box Company, who operated a box factory at the site for about twenty years. At the complex's south end, Cranford Industries enlarged the Cranford Chair

¹¹ Acme Hosiery in Asheboro had only \$26,000-worth of capital but employed two hundred workers who manufactured \$300,000-worth of merchandise in 1921. Randleman Hosiery Mills (Randolph County's first knitting mill), and Staley Hosiery Mill Company were significantly smaller businesses with 40 and 31 employees, respectively. The mills were located in the communities after which they were named. Burgess, *Randolph County, Economic and Social*, 37; Womick, "A dream that just ran out of steam," A10.

¹² Sanborn Map Company, Asheboro, North Carolina, April 1922, Sheet 3 and April 1931, Sheet 3; Whatley, *Architectural History of Randolph County*, 194.

¹³ *Ibid.*; *News and Observer, The North Carolina Yearbook* (Raleigh: *News and Observer*, 1931), 78.

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Company factory. All of the buildings that Asheboro Furniture Company had constructed on the site were removed and a long, rectangular, one-story, brick woodworking and chair manufacturing facility was built around 1918. The new factory's short stepped-parapet elevations faced South Church Street and the railroad. A loading platform extended from the east elevation toward the railroad, and a one-story wood bending room, a kiln, and an engine room projected from the south elevation. The company also constructed a two-story frame building at the property's south edge (on the north side of Stedman Street, now West Academy Street) that was utilized for chair varnishing, painting, and storage. A ramp led from the chair finishing building's second story (on the west elevation) to a platform near the factory's southwest corner.¹⁴

The Cranford Chair Company had grown to employ forty-five workers in 1921 and produced approximately \$200,000-worth of merchandise that year. About 1925, the company erected a two-story brick building at the northeast corner of West Academy and South Church streets (parallel to South Church Street) to house their cabinet production and finishing operations. They also constructed two large lumber drying kilns at the east end of the one-story brick factory and a one-story building utilized to prepare merchandise for shipping on the chair finishing building's north side. An elevated platform led from the chair finishing building's second story (on the west elevation) to the cabinet factory's east elevation, and a one-story frame hyphen connected the cabinet and chair manufacturing buildings.¹⁵

In 1929, Cranford Industries changed their chair manufacturing business's name to the Cranford Furniture Company, and subsequently added dining room furniture to their production line. The Cranford Furniture plant's 1931 expansion resulted in forty additional employees being hired, increasing the staff by almost a third to a total of 132 workers. By 1935, the company produced approximately \$500,000-worth of bedroom and dining room furniture annually using Randolph County gum, walnut, and maple lumber. Increased demand for their merchandise created the need to update the factory, resulting in the installation of equipment valued at \$250,000 in 1936. The company employed 145 workers at that time.¹⁶

¹⁴ Sanborn Map Company, Asheboro, North Carolina, April 1922, Sheet 3; Whatley, *Architectural History of Randolph County*, 194, 223.

¹⁵ Fred Burgess, *Randolph County, Economic and Social*, 41; Sanborn Map Company, Asheboro, North Carolina, April 1931, Sheet 3.

¹⁶ Whatley, *Architectural History of Randolph County* page 223; "Cranford Furniture Manufacturing Plant," *Burlington Daily Times*, July 21, 1931, page 4; "Cranford Furniture Company Develops Into an Outstanding Unit of the Cranford Group," *The Randolph Tribune*, Randolph County Progress Edition, circa 1937, page 3; James A. Hayworth, "The Industrial Development of Asheboro, North Carolina," paper for History 162, taught by Dr. Hugh T. Lefler, May 18, 1956, page 8. A university name is not included on this document, but Dr. Hefler was a UNC-Chapel Hill history professor.

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Cranford Industries also expanded National Chair Company's furniture manufacturing endeavors in the early 1930s. The company's one hundred employees fabricated chairs, rockers, and breakfast room furniture in three plants by 1935, including a factory originally erected to serve the Randolph Chair Company that stood on the west side of South Fayetteville Street approximately four blocks southeast of the Asheboro Hosiery Mills and Cranford Furniture Company complex on the opposite (east) side of the railroad. In the spring of 1934, the National Chair Company purchased Piedmont Chair Company and took over the operation of their plant that was located at the southeast corner of South Church and West Academy Streets (opposite the Cranford Furniture factory), where they employed forty men to manufacture the same products. The southernmost National Chair Company factory (formerly Randolph Chair Company) was known as Plant No 1 and manufactured chairs, as did the former Piedmont Chair Company, called Plant No. 2. Cranford Industries owned a trucking fleet charged with distributing their furniture.¹⁷

In 1937, Cranford Industries established a new business, the Asheboro Hardwood Company, to supply material for their furniture-making endeavors. The Kivett Street plant encompassed a large lumber storage yard and milling equipment to create dimensional lumber. The company intended to utilize as much Randolph County timber as possible in an effort to support the local economy.¹⁸

The Cranford Industries conglomerate also included the Standard Tytape Company, established by C. C. Cranford and Sam Story on October 1, 1933. The business soon outgrew its location in the former Asheboro Broom Company building on the west side of South Church Street directly opposite Asheboro Hosiery Mill No. 1. Sanborn maps indicate that the brick-veneered, heavy timber frame building, erected between 1922 and 1931, initially had a two-story eastern section (fronting South Church Street) and a one-story rear section with a straw warehouse and a dipping and bleaching room. The Standard Tytape Company enlarged the building and invested in two hundred machines capable of producing 1,200 yards of tape used to bind together bundles of manufactured goods daily. By 1935, ten employees operated 750 machines. Two years later, thirty employees generated 3,500 yards of tape on a daily basis, and production continued to grow. In 1939 the company's assets, valued at \$15,750, included 10,500 twisting machines and 700 braiding machines. The company employed between twenty and twenty-five workers at that time.¹⁹

¹⁷ "Keystone of Stability in Cranford Enterprises," *Raleigh News and Observer*, April 7, 1935; Sanborn Map Company, Asheboro, North Carolina, April 1922 and April 1931, Sheet 1.

¹⁸ "Hardwood Plant Latest Addition to Cranford Group," *The Randolph Tribune*, Randolph County Progress Edition, circa 1937, page 3.

¹⁹ Ibid.; North Carolina Division of Commerce and Industry, North Carolina Department of Labor, and the Works Progress Administration, *Industrial Directory and Reference Book of the State of North Carolina* (Durham: Christian Printing Company, 1938), 507; *News and Observer*, *The North Carolina Yearbook* (Raleigh: *News and Observer*, 1939), 114; "Standard Tytape Company One of Largest Tape Plants Operating in North Carolina," *The Randolph Tribune*, Randolph County Progress Edition, circa 1937, page 3; James A. Hayworth, "The Industrial Development of Asheboro,

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By April 1950, the Standard Tytape Company occupied a three-building complex. The original two-story edifice was expanded to the north and a second story was added to the rear warehouse. The building's east section functioned as a machine shop at that time. The two-story, brick-veneered, steel-framed edifice at the complex's north end was erected in early 1950 to house the cotton tape knitting equipment. The small one-story commercial building on its south elevation had been constructed around 1940.²⁰

C. C. Cranford managed his myriad business interests from the one-story brick Cranford Industries office erected adjacent to Asheboro Hosiery Mills No. 1 and 2 in 1925. The office faced South Church Street and the Standard Tytape complex across the road. The company's diversification was particularly important during the early 1930s, which brought challenges to the textile industry nationwide. Mechanization transformed manufacturing operations, with more efficient equipment resulting in mill employee layoffs. Job loss, decreased pay, and poor working conditions thus made unions more appealing to mill workers. The Great Depression further contributed to pay cuts and job losses in Asheboro and elsewhere, and set the stage for mill employees across the South to participate in the General Textile Strike of 1934, which closed down textile mills throughout the region. Many mill owners fired known union members and sympathizers. Union efforts were not in vain, however, as the Roosevelt administration's social and economic reform programs eventually resulted in the institution of a forty-hour work week and increased worker pay.²¹

C. C. Cranford's hosiery and furniture operations remained profitable during this period. In 1937, Asheboro Hosiery Mills was one of Randolph County's largest industrial concerns, employing six hundred workers who used one thousand circular knitting machines to manufacture sixty thousand pairs of hose daily. C. C. Cranford's wife Annie served as the Asheboro Hosiery Mills' secretary and their sons Samuel Davis (known as Davis) and Clarence assisted with the management of the company's businesses. By 1938, Cranford Industries, which then encompassed Asheboro Hosiery Mills, Cranford Furniture Company, National Chair Company, Piedmont Chair Company, Standard Tytape Company, and the Asheboro Hardwood Company, provided jobs for fifteen hundred Randolph

North Carolina," 9. In 1934, Cranford sold the Asheboro Broom Company, which he had owned since 1918, to L. L. Whitaker, who subsequently moved the broom operation to a North Fayetteville Street plant. Mr. Story had previously managed the Asheboro Broom Company for Cranford. L. L. Whitaker's son, Wiley M. Whitaker, later owned Asheboro Broom Company, renaming it Bess Maid, Inc. and producing janitorial supplies in a plant on Highway 64 East by 1980. Randolph County Historical Society, *Randolph County, 1779-1979* (Winston-Salem: Hunter Publishing Company, 1980), 167.

²⁰ Sanborn Map Company, Asheboro, North Carolina, April 1950, Sheet 1.

²¹ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, James Leloudis, Robert Korstad, Mary Murphy, Lu Ann Jones and Christopher B. Daly, *Like a Family: The Making of the Southern Cotton Mill World* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1987), 202-208; Margaret Crawford, *Building the Workingman's Paradise: The Design of American Company Towns* (London and New York: Verso, 1995), 194-195.

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County residents. The company also afforded their employees with recreational opportunities, sponsoring numerous athletic teams and social clubs. The *Asheboro Courier* lauded the Cranford's concern for their workers' quality of life, stating that: "The same conditions of contented labor that are prevalent in the Asheboro Hosiery Mills is [sic] true throughout all of the Cranford Industries. Besides paying the employees good livable wages, the mills have made it a policy to extend a considerate hand in all matters that tend to better living and working conditions."²²

In the late 1930s, the company erected a large two-story brick addition with structural steel posts and beams near Asheboro Hosiery Mill's southeast corner, doubling the building's size and significantly improving the facility's function. The former Cranford Furniture complex was also expanded significantly to meet production demands. Cranford Industries constructed a large two-story brick wing that extended from the 1925 factory's southeast corner, five small two-story spray booths (three projected from the new wing's north elevation and two extended from the 1925 building's east elevation), a one-story glue room that was accessible from both the 1918 factory's south elevation and the 1925 factory's northeast corner, and a long, narrow lumber shed on the 1918 building's east elevation.²³

North Carolinians rose to the challenges of World War II in the early 1940s. Approximately 4,500 Randolph County residents served in the military during the war, and those left behind were occupied with the war effort in a variety of ways, from participating in bond drives to filling vacant positions at mills and factories that accelerated their production to meet the needs of servicemen and women. Industrial jobs increased by seventy-five percent in the South over the course of World War II, with traditionally underemployed groups such as women, African Americans, and the elderly receiving invaluable education, training, and experience. Output soared after May 1943, when President

²² Randolph County Historical Society, *Randolph County, 1779-1979*, 167; Womick, "A dream that just ran out of steam," A10; "Keystone of Stability in Cranford Enterprises," *Raleigh News and Observer*, April 7, 1935; "Relations Between Industries and Employees Most Cordial; Cooperative Spirit Unexcelled," *The Randolph Tribune*, Randolph County Progress Edition, circa 1937, page 3; *News and Observer*, *The North Carolina Yearbook*, 1939, page 114; "Diversified Industrial Concerns Headed By C. C. Cranford In Asheboro Have Played Important Part In That Region's Growth and Progress," August 24, 1938, from the "Asheboro: Industries" vertical file in the Randolph Room of the Asheboro Public Library. C. C. Cranford married High Point native Annie Davis in November 1896 and the couple had four children: Edward, Vivian, Clarence, and Davis. "75th Birthday Today," *Raleigh News and Observer* article reprinted in an unnamed newspaper on February 2, 1950.

²³ Sanborn Map Company, Asheboro, North Carolina, April 1950, Sheet 3; Asheboro Chamber of Commerce, *Asheboro, North Carolina: The Center of North Carolina* (High Point: Barber-Hall Print Company, circa 1939); Asheboro Chamber of Commerce, *Asheboro, North Carolina: The Center of North Carolina* (High Point: Hall Print Company, circa 1941).

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Franklin D. Roosevelt established the Office of War Mobilization to coordinate a diverse array of support endeavors including manufacturing, scientific research, and agricultural production.²⁴

Asheboro's industrial development burgeoned during the 1940s, far surpassing the twentieth century's earlier decades. It was in this economic climate that Cranford Industries renovated the Asheboro Hosiery Mills complex in order to expand their knitting operations. A one-story loading dock was erected on Asheboro Hosiery Mill No. 1's south elevation between 1941 and 1950 and the three-story Old Dominion Box Company factory and the adjacent two-story Asheboro Hosiery Mill No. 2 building in the complex's northeast quadrant were extensively remodeled in 1945. The floor systems in the three-story factory were removed and the interior was completely reconfigured, creating a two-story building with high ceilings and improved lighting. A narrow, two-story, brick, Art Moderne-style addition on the west elevation created a new entrance and stair-hall. The contiguous two-story building also received a long, two-story, brick, four-bay-deep addition on its west elevation, almost doubling its square footage.²⁵

Asheboro Hosiery Mills' production increased significantly after 212 new full-fashioned (stockings with seams at the back of each leg) and seamless hosiery machines were installed in the renovated complex. Even though modern equipment was more efficient—a full-fashioned hosiery machine, for example, wove thirty stockings at a time—Cranford anticipated hiring almost five hundred knitters, fixers, loopers, seamers, and finishing room workers to facilitate the fabrication process.²⁶

National Chair Company's Fayetteville Street plant was damaged by a fire on July 3, 1941, and the corporation, managed by W. Clyde Lucas in partnership with C. C. Cranford, leased the Cranford Furniture complex to serve as their third Asheboro plant that year. National Chair Company was a sizable operation at that time, employing 550 workers at their Asheboro factories in 1942. National Chair Company initially manufactured bedroom furniture at the former Cranford Furniture plant, but by 1943, sixty percent of their production was for the war effort. Mr. Lucas stated that "Uncle Sam comes first," as the company fabricated stretcher forms, medicine cabinets, convalescent rockers, mess tables, specialty chairs, and hospital beds in addition to their regular inventory.²⁷

²⁴ Marilyn M. Harper, et. al. *World War II and the American Home Front* (Washington, D. C.: The National Historic Landmarks Program, October 2007), 3, 13-16; Randolph County Historical Society, *Randolph County, 1779-1979*, 179-180.

²⁵ "Asheboro Hosiery Mill Expansion Under Way Provide Plenty of Jobs," *Asheboro Courier-Tribune*, September 9, 1945, page 1; Womick, "A dream that just ran out of steam," A10; Sanborn Map Company, Asheboro, North Carolina, April 1950, Sheet 3.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ "Furniture Plant Damaged by Blaze," *High Point Enterprise*, July 3, 1941, 12; Harriette Hammer Walker, "Younger Men of Asheboro," *High Point Enterprise*, January 12, 1942, 9; Sanborn Map Company, Asheboro, North

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C. C. Cranford also speculated in factory construction at other Asheboro locations during this period. He erected a two-story, fifty-seven-thousand-square-foot factory on the outskirts of town in 1946 and sold it to the Cleveland-based National Carbon Company, a United States Navy subcontractor who had established a North Carolina presence when they produced submarine batteries and underwater detonators at the former Chatham Manufacturing Company plant in Winston-Salem from 1943 until 1945. Approximately three hundred National Carbon Company employees manufactured batteries at the Asheboro plant in 1947.²⁸

The Cranford family's local business development efforts continued through the late 1940s. C. C. Cranford commissioned Asheboro contractor S. E. Trogdon to build a forty-thousand-square-foot rayon mill to house Asheboro Weaving, a Klopman Mills concern, on the north side of town in 1947. The next year, Cranford erected a modern bus station to serve Asheboro residents. He also invested in Asheboro's downtown commercial district. In partnership with his son Davis, Cranford began constructing three commercial buildings in downtown Asheboro that were completed in 1949, spurring renovations in other retail establishments that transformed the commercial district.²⁹

The *Raleigh News and Observer* selected C. C. Cranford as "Tar Heel of the Week" on the eve of his seventy-fifth birthday in 1950, recognizing his many civic and industrial contributions. Cranford served as Asheboro's mayor four times, as founding member and president of the Asheboro Chamber of Commerce, as a Randolph County commissioner, as chairman of the Randolph County democratic executive committee, as a state senator, and as a member of Randolph Hospital, Inc.'s board of directors. Other Asheboro leaders touted his business acumen and enterprising spirit.³⁰

C. C. Cranford's health began to decline after he suffered a stroke in 1949, but he remained active until his death in 1955. His son Samuel Davis Cranford continued his father's tradition of community service and business leadership. In addition to his responsibilities as president of the family's companies, he served as Asheboro's Chamber of Commerce president for two terms in the 1950s; a

Carolina, April 1950, Sheet 3, accessed via NCLive; Z. H. Rush, "What Industry has Done in the Development and Progress of Randolph County," *The State*, February 13, 1943, page 17.

²⁸ "75th Birthday Today," *Raleigh News and Observer* article reprinted in an unnamed newspaper on February 2, 1950; "Agency History," Eveready Company Papers Finding Aid, Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Center Library, Fremont, Illinois, [http://www.rbhayes.org/hayes/mssfind/285/eveready.htm#Scope and Content](http://www.rbhayes.org/hayes/mssfind/285/eveready.htm#Scope%20and%20Content), accessed in February 2011. National Carbon Company, which was established in 1886 and acquired the American Eveready Company in 1914, eventually became the Energizer Corporation.

²⁹ In 1936, Cranford erected the downtown Asheboro commercial building that housed Hudson-Belk Department Store. "75th Birthday Today," *Raleigh News and Observer* article reprinted in an unnamed newspaper on February 2, 1950. Asheboro Weaving became a division of Burlington Industries. Randolph County Historical Society, *Randolph County, 1779-1979*, 168; Mills, *Randolph County: A Brief History*, 105.

³⁰ Ibid.

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board member of Asheboro's Rotary Club, Memorial Foundation, United Fund, People's Savings and Loan, Randolph Hospital, and First United Methodist Church; a director at Wachovia Bank and Trust; and a member of Asheboro's Sports Council and Volunteer Fire Department.³¹

Samuel Davis Cranford immediately faced challenges resulting from changing women's fashion, which dramatically impacted the hosiery industry in the 1950s. Randolph County's 35 hosiery plants (17 seamless, 15 full-fashioned, and 3 knitting) employed 4,457 workers in 1953. J. P. Doyle Company of New York marketed the products of Asheboro Hosiery Mills, which was valued at \$63,000 at that time and operated circular knitting and full-fashioned hosiery machines. By the late 1950s, full-fashioned hosiery was out of vogue, and the associated job of sewing seams became obsolete. Almost half (49.4 percent) of the nation's hosiery mills were located in North Carolina in 1958, but the state's full-fashioned hosiery mills declined sixty-one percent in number (from 414 to 159 plants) between 1958 and 1963.³²

As new competitors emerged and the industry continued to change in the 1960s, Asheboro Hosiery Mills revamped its production, scaling back manufacturing efforts to focus on dying and packaging stockings woven by other companies. After Samuel Davis Cranford Sr.'s untimely death in 1971 at the age of sixty, his son, Samuel Cranford Jr. became president. Assisted by experienced employees including plant manager John Wells, secretary Lenny Ward, and bookkeeper Mary McMaster, Sam Jr. led the company to resume hosiery manufacturing, first in a north Asheboro plant and then at the South Church Street mill.³³

Fashion trends influenced the hosiery business again in the 1970s as more women began wearing pants and therefore purchased short stockings, which were much less labor-intensive to produce than pantyhose, or dispensed with hosiery altogether. Intense competition within the domestic hosiery industry and rapidly changing technology contributed to Sam Cranford Jr.'s decision to close Asheboro Hosiery Mills in 1998.³⁴

³¹ "C. C. Cranford, Asheboro 'Builder,' Dies Suddenly; Funeral Wednesday," 1955, unnamed newspaper article from the "Asheboro: Biography, Cranford" vertical file in the Randolph Room of the Asheboro Public Library; "Cranford Honored as C of C President," *The Randolph Guide*, March 26, 1958; "S. D. Cranford," *High Point Enterprise*, March 17, 1971, C16.

³² Womick, "A dream that just ran out of steam," A10; C. H. McGregor, *The Hosiery Manufacturing Industry in North Carolina and Its Marketing Problems*, Research Paper 15, Graduate School of Business Administration, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, June 1965, 7, 23; "State has 56 Counties Producing Hosiery and Other Knit Goods," *The Employment Security Commission Quarterly*, Winter-Spring 1953, page 5, and "Asheboro Hosiery Mills," page 30.

³³ Womick, "A dream that just ran out of steam," A10. Randolph County entrepreneurs established approximately thirty new hosiery mills, mostly small concerns with less than twelve employees, between 1955 and 1970; Mills, *Randolph County: A Brief History*, 109.

³⁴ Ibid.

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B & H Panel Company purchased the Cranford Furniture Company building at 230 West Academy Street in 1987 and acquired the South Church Street parcels containing Asheboro Hosiery Mills No. 1 and the Cranford Industries office in 1999. The company produces laminated hardwood bedrails and metal mattress supports.³⁵

Asheboro's Industrial Development

The completion of a Southern Railway line through Asheboro in July 1889 spurred development and the municipality's population exploded, almost doubling every decade between 1890 and 1930. John Milton Worth established two of the city's earliest manufactories, Asheboro Roller Mills and a lumber mill, abutting the railroad tracks. After an early 1890s fire destroyed many commercial buildings on Main Street's east side near the courthouse, other entrepreneurs followed suit, erecting brick mills and factories on lots closer to the railroad than the courthouse. The McAlister family began operating Asheboro's first hosiery mill in a brick commercial building at the intersection of Salisbury and Main streets in the late 1890s.³⁶

In 1900, Asheboro Roller Mills and Home Building and Materials Company owners J. D. Ross, Arthur Ross, and W. J. Scarboro erected an electric generator to power their adjacent plants. Arthur Ross partnered with C. C. Cranford in 1905 to form the Asheboro Electric Company, making power available to other townspeople. The city purchased the company in 1911, but residents were afforded use of electric power only at night given the demands of local industries.³⁷

Acme Hosiery Company, established by seventeen Asheboro businessmen in 1907, was the city's first modern textile manufacturing concern. D. B. McCrary and T. H. Redding purchased the struggling company in 1909 and their capital investment soon transformed the mill. Like many others during this period, Acme Hosiery Company initially produced cotton socks and later began manufacturing full-fashioned silk and rayon hosiery under the auspices of McCrary Hosiery Mills, founded in 1924. McCrary acquired the adjacent Parks Hosiery Mill on North Church Street in 1932 and soon became one of thirty-two hosiery mills in the United States authorized to weave DuPont's new nylon fiber, which was introduced in 1938. McCrary Hosiery Mills remained Asheboro's largest full-fashioned hosiery business that year, with between seven and eight hundred employees.³⁸

³⁵ "B & H Panel Company," <http://www.bhpanel.com/>, accessed in December 2010.

³⁶ Whatley, *Architectural History of Randolph County*, 188-189; Mills, *Randolph County: A Brief History*, 86; Hammer and Lambert, "History of Asheboro (to 1938)," 5.

³⁷ Whatley, *Architectural History of Randolph County*, 192.

³⁸ Ibid., 195; Mills, *Randolph County: A Brief History*, 89, 97, 126; North Carolina Division of Commerce and Industry, North Carolina Department of Labor, and the Works Progress Administration, *Industrial Directory and Reference Book of the State of North Carolina*, 1938, 506; Acme-McCrary Hosiery Mills. *Acme-McCrary: Fifty Years in Hosiery, 1909-1959* (Raleigh, NC: Edwards & Broughton Company, 1959), not paginated; "Acme-McCrary celebrates 75 years of history," *The*

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During World War II, the company furnished the military with nylon for parachutes, ponchos, and other items and was therefore able to increase the size of their Asheboro and Sapona plants. In 1948, the company constructed two of Asheboro's most distinctive Art Moderne-style buildings—a mill at 173 North Church Street and the Acme-McCrary Recreation Building, erected at a cost of approximately \$500,000. Acme and McCrary merged in 1967, forming the Acme-McCrary Corporation, which is still in operation, producing women's activewear and lingerie. The recreation building is now called the Acme-McCrary and Sapona Fitness Center.³⁹

North Carolina was second only to Pennsylvania in the number of hosiery mills operating in 1927, when 117 plants in thirty-five counties employed approximately 15,500 workers and produced hosiery valued at almost \$53 million. Alamance County contained the largest number of hosiery mills (26), followed by Guilford County (15), Catawba County (10), Burke and Durham counties (8 each), and Forsyth and Randolph counties (5 each). In 1936, North Carolina's 187 hosiery mills (of the South's 239) encompassed 2,028 full-fashioned hosiery machines. By the late 1930s, more new hosiery mills were being established in North Carolina than any other type of industrial plant. In 1938, forty-four new plants were erected and thirty-eight existing hosiery mills were expanded, resulting in a total of 249 hosiery mills (75 full-fashioned and 174 seamless) by 1939. North Carolina manufactured approximately twenty-six percent of the nation's hosiery that year, almost doubling the state's product in 1929.⁴⁰

Asheboro's hosiery industry reflected this growth trend. Although Asheboro Hosiery and Acme-McCrary still dominated the local hosiery manufacturing scene in the 1920s, brothers Charles G. and Joseph C. Bossong, who incorporated Bossong Mills in New York in 1927 and erected a 25,000-square foot Asheboro plant in 1928, transformed Asheboro's hosiery industry through the introduction of the full-fashioned stocking fabrication process to the city. The company's approximately thirty employees initially operated ten knitting machines. By 1938, Bossong Mills employed between 450 and 500 workers, making them almost as large an operation as Asheboro Hosiery Mills, which had between around six hundred employees that year. The company was one of the first hosiery mills in the country

Courier-Tribune, Asheboro, October 21, 1984, page 4; Chip Womack, "Families, not family, remain key ingredient," *The Courier-Tribune*, Asheboro, October 31, 1999, pages 1A and 12A; Larry Penkava, "McCrary Gym was gathering place," *Randolph Guide*, April 7, 1999, pages 1 and 11.

³⁹ Ibid. The Acme-McCrary Recreation Building contains a 1,200-seat gymnasium with collapsible wood stadium seating, a swimming pool, a cafeteria (which currently serves as an aerobics room), and offices. A soda fountain and a jukebox once occupied the space near the bowling lanes in the basement.

⁴⁰ Marvin Shirley, "Of 672 Mills In County, State Has 117, Is Second to Pennsylvania With 277," *The Charlotte Observer*, November 23, 1930; Robert Menzies, "Stockings Miss North Carolina Buys From Chicago Probably Made at Home," *Raleigh News and Observer*, October 24, 1937; "Migration," *Raleigh News and Observer*, January 29, 1939; C. H. McGregor, *The Hosiery Manufacturing Industry in North Carolina and Its Marketing Problems*, Research Paper 15, Graduate School of Business Administration, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, June 1965, 6-7.

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to weave DuPont's new nylon fiber, which was introduced in 1938 but was in limited supply during World War II due to its use for military applications. Hosiery mills were forced to utilize silk, which was also difficult to procure as Japan was the world's primary supplier. In 1953, the Bossong plant's sixty full-fashioned machines knitted ladies' hosiery marketed by a New York factor. Due to changing demand, the company transitioned completely from full-fashioned to seamless hosiery manufacture in 1959. Bossong Mills still produces hosiery at their 840 West Salisbury Street complex.⁴¹

The number of hosiery concerns located in Asheboro increased significantly during the 1930s. Parks Hosiery Mills, managed by Hugh Parks, produced ladies' silk and rayon hose with 176 knitting machines in 1931. J. Roosevelt Hinshaw's company, Hinshaw Hosiery Mills, employed less than ten workers who wove children's socks on thirty circular knitting machines in 1939. N. McLaurin Cranford purchased Keystone Hosiery in the late 1930s and established McLaurin Hosiery Mills. The company's approximately 200 employees manufactured "men's banner wrap and misses' anklets" on 183 circular knitting machines in 1939. Cranford sold the company to Burlington Mills before his death in 1945. The northern building was constructed in 1947.⁴² Asheboro Elastics Corporation, founded in 1986, currently operates the complex, which now has a 150 North Park Street address.

Arthur Ross founded Tip-Top Hosiery Mills in 1932 to produce men's hosiery. In 1939, the company owned \$35,000-worth of assets including one hundred knitting machines and employed between 75 and 100 workers. His son Arthur Ross Jr. served as president in 1953, when the Asheboro plant manufactured a variety of socks including "Genuine wrap, English ribs, argyle, and cushion soles" on 167 circular knitting machines. The company ceased operating in 1972.⁴³

Numerous small hosiery mills were listed in Asheboro Chamber of Commerce brochures and Asheboro City Directories from 1930 through 1960, but most operated for only a short period and employed less than twelve workers. Such businesses include Allred Hosiery Mills, Arch Hosiery Mills, Auman Hosiery Mills, Balfour Hosiery Company, Brown and York Hosiery Mill, Burke

⁴¹ Ibid.; North Carolina Division of Commerce and Industry, et. al., *Industrial Directory and Reference Book of the State of North Carolina*, 1938, 506; "Bossong Mills," <http://bossongmills.com/>, accessed in December 2010; "Bossong Hosiery Mills, Inc.," *The Employment Security Commission Quarterly*, Winter-Spring 1953, page 30; Chip Womack, "Bossongs keep changing to keep up in tough business," *The Courier-Tribune*, Asheboro, October 28, 1999, pages 1A and 16A.

⁴² Sanborn Map Company, Asheboro, North Carolina, April 1931 and April 1950, Sheet 7; Randolph County Historical Society, *Randolph County, 1779-1979*, 170; *News and Observer*, *The North Carolina Yearbook*, 1931, page 78 and 1939 page 114; Randolph County Historical Society, *Randolph County, 1779-1979*, 170; North Carolina Division of Commerce and Industry et. al., *Industrial Directory and Reference Book of the State of North Carolina*, 506.

⁴³ Ibid.; Mills, *Randolph County: A Brief History*, 97; "Tip-Top Hosiery Mills, Inc.," *The Employment Security Commission Quarterly*, Winter-Spring 1953, page 30; Randolph County Historical Society, *Randolph County, 1779-1979*, 170.

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Hosiery Mill, Charmeuse Hosiery Industries, Cline Hosiery Mill, Cornelison and Hallman Hosiery Company, Craven Hosiery Mill, Fair Grounds Hosiery Mills, Richard Grey Hosiery Company, Golda Hosiery Mill, Harvelle Hosiery Mills, Isley Hosiery Company, Kennedy Hosiery Mills, Longwear Hosiery Mills, Luck Hosiery Mills, Martha Mills, Moffit Hosiery Mills, E. H. Steere and Company, Swing-Taylor Hosiery, Terry Hosiery Mill, and Vuncannon Hosiery Mills.⁴⁴

Asheboro's hosiery mills were the municipality's largest industries, but other textile mills and establishments producing goods ranging from mattresses to millwork were also successful. The Chamber of Commerce reported that the city's fifty-one industrial plants drew from an abundant local labor force in 1937. C. C. Cranford's 1938 letter detailing Asheboro's economy lists thirty-eight industries operating at that time, including three full-fashioned hosiery mills, two seamless hosiery mills, two mills that manufactured men's half-hose, a broom factory, a printed string plant, a silk throwing plant, a handkerchief factory, a tape manufacturing plant, a flour and feed mill, a paper box factory, a creamery, two ice plants, two lumber and building supply companies, four furniture factories, and fourteen other sundry concerns.⁴⁵

Stedman Manufacturing Company, established by Sulon B. Stedman in 1930 to make handkerchiefs, expanded their Hoover Street factory with the construction of a large, two-story, streamlined, brick building in the late 1930s. The United States Navy commissioned the company to produce men's t-shirts during World War II, and they continued fabricating men's apparel at a new plant after the war ended. The Stedman complex at 604 Hoover Street was utilized by Sunspun Chenilles by 1941 and Blue Gem Manufacturing Company, who fabricated work garments, by 1951.⁴⁶

Cranford Industries dominated Asheboro's furniture manufacturing scene as they had created or purchased the city's largest factories (Randolph Chair, Cranford Furniture, National Chair, and Piedmont Chair) by the mid-1930s. The P and P Chair Company, established by World War I veterans

⁴⁴ Asheboro Chamber of Commerce, *Asheboro, North Carolina: The Center of North Carolina* (High Point: Barber-Hall Print Company, circa 1939); Asheboro Chamber of Commerce, *Asheboro, North Carolina: The Center of North Carolina* (High Point: Hall Print Company, circa 1941); Asheboro Chamber of Commerce, *Asheboro, North Carolina: The Center of North Carolina* (circa 1938 brochure in Randolph County vertical file, North Carolina Collection Vault, Box 1, Folder 1); Charles W. Miller, *Miller's Asheboro, N. C. City Directories* (Asheville: Southern Directory Company, 1939-1940, 1949-1950, 1960).

⁴⁵ Asheboro Chamber of Commerce, *Asheboro, North Carolina: The Center of North Carolina*, circa 1937 brochure in the Asheboro Chamber of Commerce vertical file, Randolph Room, Asheboro Public Library; C. C. Cranford, "Asheboro Today," December 19, 1938 letter written to be sealed in the Asheboro Municipal building's corner stone, in the Asheboro Hosiery Mills vertical file, Randolph Room, Asheboro Public Library.

⁴⁶ Asheboro Chamber of Commerce, *Asheboro, North Carolina: The Center of North Carolina* (High Point: Barber-Hall Print Company, circa 1939); Mills, *Randolph County: A Brief History*, 103, 106; Sanborn Map Company, Asheboro, North Carolina, April 1931 and April 1950, Sheet 9.

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William Carl Page and Arthur Presnell in 1926 to produce caned chairs, was the largest competing concern. The company manufactured a rocking chair called the “Carolina Rocker” by 1930. The chair became known as the “Kennedy Rocker” after President John F. Kennedy purchased one at his physician Janet Travell’s suggestion that it might alleviate his chronic back pain. The company remained in operation until November 2008. Carolina Mutual Insurance Company purchased the property in February 2009 and demolished the complex between December 1, 2010 and early March 2011.⁴⁷

North Carolina was the nation’s fifth-largest furniture manufacturer in 1929, with 146 plants operated by 16,648 employees manufacturing product valued at approximately \$53 million, including twenty percent of the bedroom furniture and fifteen percent of the dining room furniture in the country. By 1939, when approximately forty thousand workers produced about \$125-million-worth of merchandise, the state dominated the national wood household furniture market. In 1947, around 63,000 North Carolina employees manufactured furniture valued at almost \$450 million.⁴⁸

Despite the statewide increase in furniture production, only a few factories other than those operated by Cranford Industries were listed in Asheboro Chamber of Commerce brochures and Asheboro City Directories from 1930 through 1960. Cricket Chair Company, Craven Chair Company, Dixie Furniture Company, Regal Furniture Corporation, and J. D. Ross and Company were much smaller operations.⁴⁹

Industrial Architecture Context

North Carolina’s early textile operations depended on waterpower, making locations along the Haw, Deep, and Catawba rivers, where slate formations create falls and rapids, ideal for manufacturing. German merchant Michael Schenck erected a sawmill, gristmill, and several ironworks in Lincoln County before hiring ironworkers Absolom Warwick and Michael Beam to construct North Carolina’s first cotton mill in 1813. Only a few other entrepreneurs attempted textile manufacturing before the late 1820s, when the North Carolina legislature approved approximately fifteen new companies’ incorporations. It was not until the late 1830s that industrialists including Charles Mallet, Francis

⁴⁷ W. C. Page Jr. and Wade S. Presnell later took over the operation of their fathers’ business and the family continued to produce chairs until W. C. Page Jr.’s death on November 15, 2008. Randolph County Historical Society, *Randolph County, 1779-1979*, 162, 167; Bob Williams, “Owner’s death, hard times lead to plant closing,” *Asheboro Courier-Tribune*, November 18, 2008, pages 1A and 8A.

⁴⁸ H. E. C. Bryant, “Much Furniture is Made in N. C.,” *Raleigh News and Observer*, April 17, 1932; Joseph K. Heyman, “Furniture Industry Is In Doldrums,” *Asheville Citizen-Times*, July 10, 1949; “North Carolina Now Tops in Furniture Manufacture,” *Raleigh News and Observer*, October 15, 1949.

⁴⁹ *News and Observer*, *North Carolina Yearbook*, 1931, page 78 and 1939, page 114; Mills, *Randolph County: A Brief History*, 97-98.

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Fries, John Motley Morehead, John Trollinger, Henry Humphreys, Benjamin Elliot, and Edwin Michael Holt capitalized on the Piedmont's available sites, transportation, and labor force to establish spinning mills. Henry Humphreys was the first North Carolina manufacturer to experiment with steam power, installing a system in his Greensboro cotton mill in 1828, but most textile factory owners relied upon water as their primary power source through the late nineteenth century.⁵⁰

Industrial architectural design during this period was influenced by the need to accommodate the necessary machinery in a manner that would allow for the most efficient interaction with the power source and utilization of natural light and ventilation. Many of North Carolina's early textile producers adapted existing frame buildings to serve as their first mills. Such structures, which usually had rough-sawn wood floors and wood shingle roofs, often resembled large residential or agricultural buildings as they were typically located in rural settings along the rivers and streams that generated their power. As frame mills were extremely susceptible to fire and rarely had interior firewalls or other fire safety features, few nineteenth-century North Carolina examples survive.⁵¹

Most industrial buildings erected by the mid-nineteenth century were of "slow-burn" masonry construction, with brick walls, heavy timber framing, gabled roofs, large windows, and metal fire doors. The few extant buildings associated with antebellum North Carolina cotton mills manifest these design principles. At the time of the 1985 Randolph County architectural survey, architectural historian Lowell McKay Whatley Jr. identified six cotton mills erected before 1860 throughout the state, four of which were located in Randolph County: Randolph Manufacturing Company's "Upper Mill" in Franklinville (later known as the Franklinville Manufacturing Company), constructed in 1839, rebuilt in 1851, and expanded in 1899; Island Ford Manufacturing Company in Franklinville, erected in 1846, destroyed in 1895, and subsequently reconstructed; Cedar Falls Manufacturing Company, organized in 1836, replaced the original weatherboarded mill with a three-story brick mill in 1846, and later became the Sapona Manufacturing Company; and Union Factory, constructed in 1848 and rebuilt after an 1885 fire.⁵²

By the late nineteenth century, steam and electric power generation allowed textile mills to move to urban areas in close proximity to railroad lines and a large pool of potential mill workers. Textile mill construction evolved from a vernacular process whereby mill owners worked with builders who erected edifices based on mutually understood norms, to a field dominated by professionally-trained mill engineers who designed industrial buildings and supervised their construction. Mill engineer

⁵⁰ Glass, *The Textile Industry in North Carolina*, 4-10, 14.

⁵¹ Historian William Pierson, analysis by Betsy Hunter Bradley in *The Works: The Industrial Architecture of the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), VIII, 16-17.

⁵² Whatley, *Architectural History of Randolph County*, 28-31. Randolph Manufacturing Company burned on September 2, 2010.

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David Dyer's 1868 plans for Mechanics Mill in Fall River, Massachusetts, contributed to the prevalence of flat rather than gabled industrial building roofs. Low-pitched gable roofs remained popular, however, particularly as the textile mill engineering firm of Lockwood, Greene & Company's design for the Piedmont Manufacturing Company Mill in Greenville County, South Carolina—a three-story, brick building with a low-pitched gable roof and arched window openings erected around 1873—became a prototype for southern textile mill construction. The firm influenced mill design though the twentieth century.⁵³

Slow-burn heavy timber and brick construction continued to dominate late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century mill building technology. Projecting stair towers, large operable windows and transoms, and monitor roofs provided mill workers with light and ventilation. In an effort to minimize fire risk, brick interior walls and galvanized-sheet-metal-clad, solid-core-wood doors, known as kalamein doors, separated the mill sections where fires might start or spread rapidly. Kalamein doors would automatically close in the case of a fire, as the heat would melt a soft metal link in the door's counterweight assembly and the door would slide shut on the sloped metal track. As an additional safety precaution, engine and boiler rooms usually projected from the main mill. Water reservoirs and elevated water tanks supplied automatic sprinkler systems in many industrial complexes.

Standards imposed by machinery manufacturers and insurance companies also guided the evolution of industrial architecture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. North Carolina industrialists benefited from the contributions of engineers who disseminated specifications dictating best practices in mill layout and design. South Carolina native Daniel A. Tompkins, sent by the Pittsburgh-based Westinghouse Engine Company to Charlotte in the early 1880s to sell and coordinate the installation of the company's equipment in the region, became a driving force in the southern textile industry. Tompkins partnered with Charlotte grain merchant R. M. Miller in 1883 to establish the D. A. Tompkins Company, an engineering firm. His myriad other endeavors included speaking and publishing on topics ranging from plant organization and funding to mill, factory, and worker housing design. The company created plans for over one hundred mills in addition to other industrial buildings. Besides his design accomplishments, Tompkins, whose engineering degree was from the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, successfully advocated for the creation of textile engineering and chemistry programs at North Carolina State College in Raleigh and Clemson College in South Carolina. His auxiliary undertakings included purchasing the *Charlotte Observer* and using the newspaper to endorse New South industry.⁵⁴

⁵³ Bradley, *The Works: The Industrial Architecture of the United States*, 15-21; "Piedmont Manufacturing Company," http://www.nps.gov/history/nhl/DOE_dedesignations/Piedmont.htm, accessed in February 2011.

⁵⁴ Thomas W. Hanchett, *Sorting Out the New South City: Race, Class, and Urban Development in Charlotte, 1875-1975* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 50.

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Thomasville, North Carolina native Stuart Cramer, who began his career with the D. A. Tompkins Company, was another highly-influential mill engineer. Cramer set up his own Charlotte firm in 1895, and by 1915 had designed almost one-third of the new mills erected in the South during that period. Cramer's innovations in textile mill climate control garnered him international recognition, and he is credited with conceiving the term "air conditioning."⁵⁵

Although most industrial buildings were designed to be functional and fireproof rather than aesthetic masterpieces, their massive size and substantial construction symbolized economic progress. Iron and steel structural systems were employed in industrial buildings during the nineteenth century, but their high cost greatly limited their use. The ability to withstand the weight and vibrations of heavy machinery without failing contributed to the popularity of structural steel construction, as did the ease of fabricating framing systems from standard, factory-generated components. Steel posts and beams could be riveted together and tended to be smaller and lighter than wood or iron framing members, thus allowing for wider and taller buildings with more square footage for equipment.⁵⁶

By the early twentieth century, timber scarcity in urban areas and the popularity of monitor roofs resulted in an increased use of structural steel framing. Distinctive sawtooth roof monitors, which were common in the northeast United States and England but infrequently utilized in North Carolina, consist of a sloped south face and an almost-vertical north face with bands of tall windows that allow more light to penetrate interior spaces. Many industrial buildings employed a combination of steel interior framing and load-bearing brick exterior walls before moving to engineered masonry (brick, concrete, or tile) curtain walls that provided structural bracing but did not carry any weight. Building materials and labor were in short supply during World War II, but when construction resumed after the war's end, steel-framed industrial edifices with masonry (brick, tile, or concrete) curtain walls predominated.⁵⁷ The transition from heavy timber frame construction to steel structural systems in North Carolina was slow, however, and heavy timber beams and posts continued to be used through the 1940s.

International architectural trends also influenced industrial building design during the first half of the twentieth century. By the late 1930s, as the nation started to recover from the Great Depression, American buildings began to reflect European design tenets in their streamlined modern forms, which were particularly appropriate for industrial buildings. The early-twentieth-century Italian Futurist movement, which completely rejected historical precedents and celebrated progress, inspired edifices that embodied a machine aesthetic. The resulting architectural style, known as Art Moderne, reflects the speed, energy, and power of automobiles, trains, steamships, and factories in buildings with

⁵⁵ Ibid., 107.

⁵⁶ Bradley, *The Works: The Industrial Architecture of the United States*, 144-147.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

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horizontal lines, asymmetrical facades, flat roofs, and curved corners.⁵⁸

Asheboro's Industrial Architecture

Asheboro's simply-executed, utilitarian, early-twentieth-century frame and brick mills and factories with flat or low-pitched-gable roofs and large windows reflect the design principles espoused by Tompkins and Cramer as well as the transition from heavy timber to structural steel framing. By the 1940s, Asheboro's industrialists embraced popular building styles, particularly Art Moderne, to convey a sense of prosperity and modernity. Asheboro Hosiery Mill No. 2's 1945 expansion and Acme-McCrary's Mill No. 3 and recreation building, both erected in 1948, exemplify this trend in their streamlined features including rounded corners and glass block windows.

Although Asheboro retains a number of industrial buildings erected during the first half of the twentieth century, many have been extensively modified or demolished. The Asheboro Hosiery Mills and Cranford Furniture Company complex encompasses three of the city's earliest and most intact industrial edifices. The 1917 Asheboro Hosiery Mill No. 1, which appears to be the city's second-oldest extant hosiery mill; the 1924 Asheboro Hosiery Mill No. 2; and the 1925 Cranford Furniture Company factory have experienced remarkably little alteration over decades of continuous use.⁵⁹ The complex manifests the fire-resistant construction that continued to prevail through the twentieth-century's first decades.

Asheboro Hosiery Mill No. 1 features five-to-one common bond load-bearing brick walls, a heavy timber frame, a low-pitched gable roof, and segmental-arched window and door openings. The original, large, double-hung, twelve-over-twelve, wood-sash windows that remain on the second floor's south elevation include a mechanism that allowed the upper sash to tilt open, facilitating ventilation. A long, rectangular, wood-framed, monitor-roofed skylight provided additional illumination.

The company erected a two-story addition on the 1917 building's south end as part of their 1924 plant expansion and enlarged the mill again in the late 1930s with the construction of a two-story wing near

⁵⁸ Mark Gelernter, *A History of American Architecture: Buildings in Their Cultural and Technological Context* (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 2001), 227-228; Peter Gossel and Gabriele Leuthauser, *Architecture in the Twentieth Century* (Köln, Slovenia: Taschen, 2001), 319; Antonio Sant'Elia, *Manifesto of Futurist Architecture*, <http://www.unknown.nu/futurism/architecture.html>, accessed in February 2011. French architect Le Corbusier also equated streamlined building appearance with modern technological advances. Sara Allaback, "Essays on Modern Architecture for the National Historic Landmark Program," Unpublished draft, April 2, 2003, page 74.

⁵⁹ The first Acme Hosiery Mills building, which stands at what is now 159 North Street on the railroad's east side, was erected in 1909. Whatley, *Architectural History of Randolph County, North Carolina*, 195.

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the main mill's southeast corner, doubling the building's size.⁶⁰ The 1924 and 1930s additions were executed in five-to-one common bond with rectangular window opening and very low-pitched gable roofs. Chamfered square wood posts and substantial wood beams support the floor and roof systems in the 1924 section, while steel posts and beams were used to construct the late 1930s addition. As with many industrial buildings during this period, the exterior brick walls are load-bearing. Large metal casement windows with eight-pane central sections that tilt open illuminate the entire building.

Asheboro Hosiery Mill No. 2, erected in 1924, is also a two-story, heavy timber frame edifice with load-bearing five-to-one common bond brick walls. Cranford Industries constructed a three-story brick building that abutted the 1924 mill's north elevation at the same time and leased it to Old Dominion Box Company, who operated a factory at the site for about twenty years.⁶¹ Both buildings were extensively renovated as part of Asheboro Hosiery Mills' 1945 update. The floor systems in the three-story factory were removed and the interior was completely reconfigured, creating a two-story building with structural steel framing, high ceilings, and improved lighting. A narrow, two-story, brick, Art Moderne-style addition on the west elevation created a new entrance, stair hall, and elevator tower. The streamlined façade features translucent glass block windows and a two-story, stepped, soldier-course band surrounding the central entrance bay. The contiguous two-story building received a utilitarian, two-story, brick, four-bay-deep addition on its west elevation, almost doubling its square footage. Large metal casement windows with eight-pane central sections that tilt open illuminate the interior.⁶²

The Cranford Furniture Company factory that occupies the block's south end is another intact example of early to mid-twentieth-century industrial architecture. The two-story brick building's original section, constructed around 1925, is executed in five-to-one common bond with stepped-parapet north and south elevations and a very low-pitched gable roof. The additions to this factory, like the others in the complex, manifest the company's use of structural steel framing technology by the late 1930s. The building retains large metal casement windows with eight-pane central sections that tilt open.

Other Asheboro industrial buildings feature similar construction technology but have less integrity. The former Keystone Hosiery Mills – McLaurin Hosiery Mills complex at 150 North Park Street consists of a one-story, brick, heavy timber frame mill erected at the northeast corner of Hoover and

⁶⁰ The two-story wing does not appear on the 1931 Sanborn map but is illustrated in a line drawing and photographs that appear in Asheboro Chamber of Commerce brochures from the late 1930s and early 1940s.

⁶¹ Ibid.; *News and Observer*, *The North Carolina Yearbook* (Raleigh: *News and Observer*, 1931), 78.

⁶² "Asheboro Hosiery Mill Expansion Under Way Provide Plenty of Jobs," *Asheboro Courier-Tribune*, September 9, 1945, page 1; Chip Womick, "A dream that just ran out of steam," *The Courier-Tribune*, Asheboro, October 29, 1999, page A10; Sanborn Map Company, Asheboro, North Carolina, April 1931 with April 1950 updates, Sheet 3, accessed via NCLive.

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Park Streets in 1930. The mill features a very low-pitched gable roof with deep eaves and most of its windows have been enclosed with brick. The two-story, brick, heavy timber frame, 1947 building to the north has a flat roof and intact metal casement windows. Brick buttresses with concrete caps flank the window bays.⁶³

The former Stedman Manufacturing Company complex erected at 604 Hoover Street in 1930 is similarly utilitarian in appearance, consisting of austere one- and two-story heavy timber frame industrial buildings with load-bearing exterior brick walls pierced by large metal casement windows. Many first-floor window openings have been infilled with brick or concrete block or covered with plywood or vinyl siding. The one-story, flat-roofed, brick office addition lighted by double-hung, wood-sash windows that projects from the two-story building's façade was erected in the late 1930s.

Asheboro's largest industrial complex, owned and operated by Acme-McCrary Mills, encompasses nine buildings on 7.32 acres on the south side of West Salisbury Street. D. B. McCrary and T. H. Redding purchased the oldest building in the complex—the two-story brick mill at what is now 159 North Street on the railroad's east side—in 1909. The loading-bearing masonry building has a low-pitched gable roof with deep eaves and features arched window and door opening embellished with Italianate-style corbelled hoods below the stepped parapet on its east façade. The company expanded the complex numerous times, constructing more austere two- and three-story, brick, heavy timber and structural steel-frame warehouse and factory additions that extend west toward the railroad and south to commercial buildings on Sunset Avenue's north side. The window openings in the complex's earliest buildings, which likely contained double-hung, wood-frame sash, have been covered with vinyl siding, but large metal casement and glass block windows illuminate the later edifices.

An elevated, metal-sided, pedestrian walkway extends above the railroad at the complex's north end, providing access to a two-story, flat-roofed, 1937 warehouse executed in running bond brick veneer with cast-stone buttresses, a cast-stone watertable, and cast-stone bands encircling the building above each floor. The warehouse abuts a two-story brick factory with large metal casement windows that stands to the south on North Church Street's east side. Another elevated, metal-sided pedestrian walkway connects the 1937 building to the two-story, red brick, Art Moderne-style plant erected to the west at 173 North Church Street in 1948.

The 1948 edifice's asymmetrical façade features a central projecting bay with a two-story, fluted, cast-stone band surrounding the double-leaf aluminum door, aluminum-framed multi-paned sidelights and transom, and a large, multi-pane, aluminum-framed window surmounting the entrance above a flat-roofed metal canopy. The Acme-McCrary Recreation Building constructed at 148 North Street the

⁶³ Sanborn Map Company, Asheboro, North Carolina, April 1931 and April 1950, Sheet 7; Randolph County Historical Society, *Randolph County, 1779-1979*, 170.

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same year is even more distinctive, with a three-part façade with a recessed central section flanked by two wings with corners that step back to the outside edges. The slightly-projecting entrance bay has three double-leaf aluminum doors surmounted by transoms. Cast-stone bands and panels surround the windows and a cast-stone watertable and cornice encircle the building. Brick buttresses with cast-stone caps framed the tall glass-block gymnasium windows on the side elevations.

The two Art Moderne-style buildings in the Acme-McCrary Mills complex manifest more high-style design elements than Asheboro Hosiery Mill No. 2's 1945 façade, but all three buildings represent the influence of European architectural trends on American industrial design. Industrial architecture consistently utilizes new building materials, technology, and forms in an attempt to create edifices that epitomize efficiency, modernity, and economic progress, and these three buildings manifest that goal.

The Bossong Hosiery Mills plant has been greatly altered, but the complex, like others in Asheboro, employs both heavy timber and structural steel industrial framing. The one-story, four-bay, sawtooth-roofed edifice that stands next to the smokestack emblazoned with the company's name was encompassed by the construction of the one-story, flat-roofed 1935 factory at 840 West Salisbury Street, which was subsequently enlarged several times. Although the façade (south elevation) retains a Classical Revival-style entrance flanked by original sconces at its west end, all but one of the metal casement windows on the building's south, east, and west elevations were enclosed and the brick walls stuccoed after a 1950s expansion, significantly diminishing the building's architectural integrity. The original brick exterior walls, cast-stone foundation, metal casement windows, and cast-stone window sills are still intact on the rear (north) elevation, however. A one-story metal-sided warehouse and a 48,000-square-foot, one-story, brick-veneered, 1970 addition occupy the complex's northwest end.⁶⁴

Other Asheboro industrial concerns had much smaller operations, and many buildings constructed prior to the mid-twentieth century are no longer extant or have been significantly altered. For the most part, these complexes contained completely utilitarian factory and warehouse buildings erected to facilitate manufacturing and storage needs without any concern for aesthetic appearance.

P and P Chair Company's factory erected at the northeast corner of West Salisbury and Summit streets in 1926 encompassed a one-story building with a planing and turning cabinet room, a banding room, a drying room, a log sawing room, and an engine room, as well as an expansive two-story, gable-roofed

⁶⁴ Asheboro Chamber of Commerce, *Asheboro, North Carolina: The Center of North Carolina* (circa 1938 brochure in Randolph County vertical file, North Carolina Collection Vault, Box 1, Folder 1); Asheboro Chamber of Commerce, *Asheboro, North Carolina: The Center of North Carolina* (High Point: Barber-Hall Print Company, circa 1939), 5; Chip Womack, "Bossongs keep changing to keep up in tough business," *The Courier-Tribune*, Asheboro, October 28, 1999, pages 1A and 16A.

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building that housed the finishing, painting, and chair staging operations. Large, double-hung, six-over-six sash illuminated the interior.⁶⁵ The complex was demolished in early March 2011.

National Chair Company's (owned by Cranford Industries) South Fayetteville Street factory, originally constructed to serve as the Randolph Chair Company, is a sprawling complex that included long, two-story, manufacturing wings that intersected at right angles; a one-story, frame, gable-roofed office; and a small vertical-board-sided shed, among other buildings, in 1950.⁶⁶ Six industrial buildings and warehouses erected between 1925 and 1978 still occupy the site, but the complex has been greatly modified over time. The interconnected, one- and two-story, metal-sided frame and brick-veneered buildings stand on the railroad's east side at the south end of Asheboro's industrial corridor.

The former Banner Hosiery Mills plant consists of a small one-story building erected at 406 Hoover Street in 1940 that was completely surrounded by expansions in 1973 and 1981 and now serves as Acme-McCrary Mill No. 4. The building's windowless design reflects its later construction date. A few loading docks pierce the north elevation, but the east elevation is blind. The entrance near the south elevation's southwest corner is characterized by a Roman brick-veneered wall surmounted by canted plate-glass windows.

Klopman Mills, organized in 1947, improved the Cetwick Silk Mills plant, established in 1928, at 162 North Cherry Street to function as their Asheboro plant. The company became a division of Burlington Industries in 1954. According to Randolph County property card data, the complex includes a 1927 building, which is likely the west end's central section. The plant had been expanded by 1950, and was significantly altered by the construction of large, windowless, one- and two-story additions in 1966. The northwest corner entrance was also updated at that time by the installation of aggregate wall-sheathing panels and a flat-roofed entrance porch supported by decorative concrete block posts.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Sanborn Map Company, Asheboro, North Carolina, April 1931 and April 1950, Sheet 5; Asheboro Chamber of Commerce, *Asheboro, North Carolina: The Center of North Carolina* (High Point: Barber-Hall Print Company, circa 1939), 7.

⁶⁶ Sanborn Map Company, Asheboro, North Carolina, April 1931 and April 1950, Sheet 9.

⁶⁷ Sanborn Map Company, Asheboro, North Carolina, April 1931 and April 1950, Sheet 9; "History of Klopman Mills," October 23, 1963, from the Klopman Mills vertical file in the Randolph Room of the Asheboro Public Library; Randolph County Historical Society, *Randolph County, 1779-1979*, 170.

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Section 10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the Asheboro Hosiery Mills and Cranford Furniture Company complex are indicated by a bold line on the enclosed map. Scale: one inch equals approximately one hundred feet.

Boundary Justification

The Asheboro Hosiery Mills and Cranford Furniture Company complex occupies the south three-quarters of the block bounded by Sunset Avenue on the north, South Church Street on the west, West Academy Street on the south, and the railroad tracks on the east. The former Asheboro Hosiery Mills plant is located in the block's central section, while the buildings erected by Cranford Furniture Company stand at the block's south end. The complex is situated on six tax parcels encompassing approximately three acres historically associated with the companies.

The surrounding area is primarily commercial and industrial, with some residential development to the west and south.

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Section 11. Additional Documentation

Photo Catalog

Photographs by Heather Fearnbach, 3334 Nottingham Road, Winston-Salem, NC, in October 2010.
Digital images located at the North Carolina SHPO.

1. Cranford Furniture Company, 230 West Academy Street, 1925 factory, northwest oblique
2. Cranford Furniture Company, 1925 factory and 1930s addition (left to right), southwest oblique
3. Asheboro Hosiery Mill No. 1, South Church Street, 1917 mill and 1924 addition (left to right), northwest oblique
4. Asheboro Hosiery Mill No. 1, 1917 mill, 1924 addition, and 1940s shipping and receiving addition (left to right), southwest oblique
5. Asheboro Hosiery Mill No. 1, 1930s addition, north elevation; 1924 addition, 1917 mill, and 2000 warehouse addition, east elevation
6. Asheboro Hosiery Mill No. 1, 1924 addition, first floor interior view looking north from south end
7. Asheboro Hosiery Mill No. 1, 1930s addition, first floor interior view looking east from west end
8. Asheboro Hosiery Mill No. 2, 133 South Church Street, 1945 addition, west elevation, north end
9. Asheboro Hosiery Mill No. 2, 133 South Church Street, 1945 addition, west elevation, southwest oblique
10. Cranford Industries Office, 139 South Church Street, 1925, west elevation

Property Owners (continued)

Asheboro Hosiery Mill No. 1 and Office
B & H Panel Company
P. O. Box 3139
Asheboro, NC 27204

Asheboro Hosiery Mill No. 2
Asheboro Hosiery Mills
413 Lexington Road
Asheboro, NC 27205